

Remarks/Arguments:

Claims 1-32 are pending in the application. Claims 1-4, 14-16, 18-21, 23, 25-27 and 29-31 are rejected and claims 5-13, 17, 22, 24 and 28 are allowed. Claim 32, which is objected to as dependent on a rejected base claim but is otherwise allowable, has been rewritten into independent form. With this amendment, Applicants have also amended claims 1, 14 and 25.

Applicants thanks Examiner Izquierdo for briefly speaking with Applicants' attorneys on February 20, 2008 to discuss a possible amendment to the claims. As a result of that brief discussion, Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 14 and 25, as discussed with Examiner Izquierdo, for which Examiner Izquierdo agreed such amendment would be sufficient to overcome the rejections of record.

Rejections

Claims 1-4, 14-16, 18-21, 23, 25-27 and 29-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by EP 0757904 ("Nadal"). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections and submit that the currently pending amended claims are patentable over the cited reference for at least the reasons set forth below.

In the Response to Arguments section of the Office Action dated January 24, 2008, the Office states that "should Applicant use language which clearly defines the entire hoop as made from a single continuous filament the instant application may overcome the prior art of record." The Office was apparently concerned that the term "comprising" could include the structure of Nadal.

In response to the Office's comment and as discussed with Examiner Izquierdo, Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 14 and 25 to recite the feature of "each of said hoops defined by a single continuous filament" (in claim 1) and "at least one circumferential hoop defined by a single continuous filament" (in claims 14 and 25). As acknowledged by the Office, and as confirmed by Examiner Izquierdo by telephone, Nadal does not disclose this feature.

Therefore, Applicants submit that amended claims 1, 14 and 25 are not anticipated by Nadal nor obvious in light of Nadal. Further, claims 2-4, 15, 16, 18-21, 23, 26, 27 and 29-32

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are also patentable for at least the reasons that claims 1, 14 and 25, from which they depend, are patentable, but may be separately patentable for additional reasons as well.

Conclusion

In view of the above arguments, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-32 are patentable over Nadal and that the currently pending application is in condition for allowance. Notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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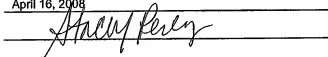
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The Director is hereby authorized to charge or credit Deposit Account No. 18-0350 for any additional fees, or any underpayment or credit for overpayment in connection herewith.

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April 16, 2008



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